

Tallahassee Mall makeover coming

The city's Growth Management Department meets with developer Blackwater Resources.



Dave Hodges, Tallahassee Democrat 7:08 a.m. EDT May 16, 2014



(Photo: Dave Hodges/Democrat)

Demolition crews will be the first workers on the scene when the redevelopment of the Tallahassee Mall begins in the coming months.

In preliminary documents that Blackwater Resources submitted to the city of Tallahassee this week, the developer proposes to begin tearing down part of the Tallahassee Mall immediately, with new construction to follow.

The effort to revitalize the property includes demolition of about 220,000 square feet of the existing buildings.

"The intended purpose is to renovate and revitalize the mall property to create opportunities for new retail, residential, entertainment and restaurants," Blackwater said in a brief description of its intentions. "Future development is in the conceptual stage of planning and will be shared with the city as the plans become refined in the very near future."

Representatives of the commercial real estate company, based in Montgomery, Ala., met Thursday with Growth Management for a pre-submittal meeting. The session was mainly for city staff to explain the forms, permits and approvals the project will require.

Blackwater's Phillip McAfee did not make any presentation about the company's plans and referred all questions to the home office, which said later that it had no further comment at this time.

In a conceptual site plan provided to the city, Blackwater shows an amphitheater occupying the former food court space immediately adjacent to the Burlington Coat Factory, one of the beleaguered mall's larger stores.

The concept sketch appears to show other changes to the mall's current retail layout, but nothing in detail.

A revival of the property would have multiple benefits.

"Basically when you're talking about a redevelopment project of this magnitude, the city of Tallahassee welcomes such a project because it brings economic development and jobs to the community," said Angeline Taylor, Growth Management's public information specialist.

Steve Palmer, administrator of the land use and environmental services division, expects more specifics as Blackwater's plans take shape.

"This meeting (Thursday) was a coordination meeting for the demolition for part of the mall. It's an essential part of this because it's a big building and there's a lot of utilities in there that need to be addressed," Palmer said.

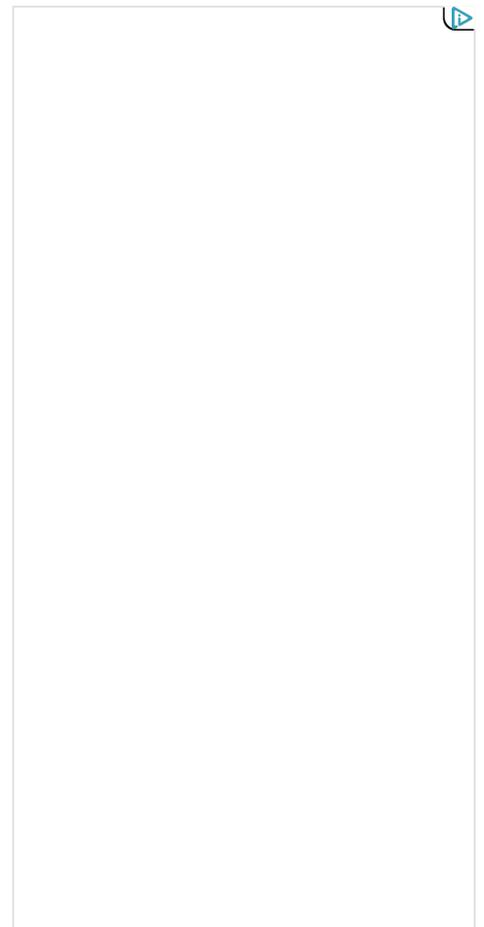
The mall property, 2415 N. Monroe St., totals 95.5 acres and includes both the main retail center and various outparcels that include smaller shops, a fitness center and an auto repair business.

Mired in the recession and the real estate slump, the mall was placed in receivership in the fall of 2008, the year it lost anchor tenants Dillards and Goody's. In 2009, the mall was put up for sale.

Blackwater has mall and shopping center properties in seven cities in Alabama, including the Northside Mall in Dothan. The company's Florida property is Shoreline Village in Destin.

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